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Fertility: Overview, 2009 to 2011

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.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0[p]	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
[p]	preliminary
[r]	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
[E]	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published
*	significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Fertility: Overview, 2009 to 2011

This article examines recent fertility trends in Canada, that is, for the years 2009, 2010 and 2011. In addition to the number of births, indicators analysed include the total fertility rate, age-specific fertility rates, average age of mother at childbirth, birth order, and completed fertility. When possible, recent trends are also compared with historical trends.

Number of births

In 2011, there were 377,636 births in Canada, up slightly from the previous year (377,213) but lower than in 2009 (380,863). The number of births in recent years has been higher than throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. This increase is at least partially attributed to higher levels of fertility, particularly for women in their thirties, as well as a greater number of women currently in their prime reproductive years (25 to 34 years).

Overall, the number of births has fluctuated over the past century, often in conjunction with historical events. There were relatively fewer births in the last part of the 1920s and during the 1930s, a time of the Great Depression and leading up to the Second World War (Figure 1). During the post-war baby boom between 1946 and 1965, the number of births increased substantially, peaking in 1959 at 479,275 births. Throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s, births again decreased but rose again to 404,669 in 1990—the highest number over the last two decades—and subsequently fell to 327,882 births in 2000, the lowest number since 1945 even though there was a larger population. Despite these annual fluctuations over the past forty years, the number of births has remained relatively stable, averaging around 365,000 births per year since 1971, while the size of the population has increased from about 22 million people in 1971 to 34.5 million people in 2011.

Similar to the national level, trends in births for the provinces and territories varied over the past several years. The pattern observed for Canada as a whole, that is, a decrease in the number of births in 2010 compared to the previous year, followed by an increase in 2011, also occurred for Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta,

Figure 1
Number of births, Canada, 1926 to 2011

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1926 to 2011, Survey 3231.

Table 1
Number of births and crude birth rate per 1,000 population, Canada, provinces and territories, 1981 to 2011

Year	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.	Canada
	number													
1981	9,120	1,897	12,079	10,503	95,322	122,183	16,073	17,209	42,638	41,474	536	1,302	...	370,336
1986	7,618	1,928	12,358	9,788	84,634	133,882	17,009	17,513	43,744	41,967	483	1,507	...	372,431
1991	7,166	1,885	12,016	9,497	97,311	151,480	17,282	15,304	42,777	45,613	568	1,634	...	402,533
1996	5,747	1,694	10,573	8,176	85,226	140,012	15,478	13,300	37,851	46,138	443	1,562	...	366,200
2001	4,716	1,380	8,909	7,195	73,695	131,710	14,002	12,275	37,619	40,575	344	613	710	333,744
2002	4,651	1,328	8,663	7,046	72,478	128,529	13,888	11,761	38,692	40,065	339	635	726	328,802
2003	4,629	1,417	8,650	7,117	73,905	130,928	13,940	12,038	40,287	40,496	335	701	758	335,202
2004	4,488	1,390	8,734	6,959	74,073	132,553	13,811	11,983	40,780	40,490	365	698	747	337,072
2005	4,501	1,340	8,557	6,892	76,346	133,760	14,145	11,967	42,110	40,827	320	712	699	342,176
2006	4,542	1,413	8,485	7,030	81,938	135,597	14,565	12,288	45,230	41,730	364	687	747	354,617
2007	4,553	1,389	8,868	7,146	84,387	138,436	15,285	13,248	49,028	43,649	355	725	794	367,864
2008	4,898	1,483	9,188	7,402	87,870	140,791	15,485	13,737	50,856	44,276	373	721	805	377,886
2009	4,915	1,457	8,989	7,391	88,868	140,372	15,940	14,243	51,722	44,993	383	711	877	380,863
2010	4,900	1,403	8,879	7,360	88,419	139,611	15,776	14,296	50,847	43,810	382	700	828	377,213
2011	4,478	1,436	8,862	7,124	88,583	140,135	15,620	14,271	51,040	44,129	431	690	837	377,636
	rate per 1,000													
1981	15.9	15.4	14.1	14.9	14.6	13.9	15.5	17.6	18.6	14.7	22.4	27.5	...	14.9
1986	13.2	15.0	13.9	13.5	12.6	14.2	15.6	17.0	18.0	14.0	19.8	27.6	...	14.3
1991	12.4	14.5	13.1	12.7	13.8	14.5	15.6	15.3	16.5	13.5	19.7	42.2	...	14.4
1996	10.3	12.5	11.4	10.9	11.8	12.6	13.6	13.1	13.6	11.9	14.1	37.4	...	12.4
2001	9.0	10.1	9.6	9.6	10.0	11.1	12.2	12.3	12.3	10.0	11.4	15.0	25.2	10.8
2002	9.0	9.7	9.3	9.4	9.7	10.6	12.0	11.8	12.4	9.8	11.2	15.2	25.2	10.5
2003	8.9	10.3	9.2	9.5	9.9	10.7	12.0	12.1	12.7	9.8	10.8	16.5	25.9	10.6
2004	8.7	10.1	9.3	9.3	9.8	10.7	11.8	12.0	12.6	9.7	11.6	16.1	25.0	10.6
2005	8.8	9.7	9.1	9.2	10.1	10.7	12.0	12.0	12.7	9.7	10.0	16.4	23.0	10.6
2006	8.9	10.2	9.0	9.4	10.7	10.7	12.3	12.4	13.2	9.8	11.3	15.9	24.3	10.9
2007	9.0	10.1	9.5	9.6	11.0	10.8	12.8	13.2	14.0	10.1	10.9	16.6	25.4	11.2
2008	9.7	10.6	9.8	9.9	11.3	10.9	12.8	13.6	14.2	10.1	11.3	16.5	25.5	11.3
2009	9.7	10.3	9.6	9.9	11.4	10.7	13.1	13.8	14.1	10.1	11.3	16.3	27.2	11.3
2010	9.6	9.8	9.4	9.8	11.2	10.6	12.8	13.7	13.7	9.7	11.0	16.0	25.2	11.1
2011	8.7	9.9	9.3	9.4	11.1	10.5	12.5	13.5	13.5	9.6	12.2	15.6	24.9	11.0

Note: Nunavut is included in the Northwest Territories before 2001.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1981 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

British Columbia, Yukon and Nunavut (Table 1). In contrast, there was a steady decrease since 2010 for Newfoundland and Labrador and Manitoba and beginning earlier in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (2009) and the Northwest Territories (2008).

Total fertility rate

The total fertility rate refers to the number of children that a woman would have over the course of her reproductive life if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates observed in a particular calendar year. It is based on a compilation of the fertility experiences of many different cohorts of women in a given year. An advantage of the total fertility rate is that it is easily calculated and is not affected by variations in population size or age structure, thus it allows for annual as well as provincial/territorial and international comparisons. The total fertility rate in Canada was 1.61 children per woman in 2011, continuing a decline over the past four years from 1.68 (2008) to 1.67 (2009) and to 1.63 (2010), but still higher than the 1996 to 2007 period (Table 2). Similar to all years since 1972, the total fertility rate throughout 2009 to 2011 remained below the replacement level of approximately 2.1 children per woman, the level required to replace the population in the absence of migration.

In 2011, the total fertility rate was above replacement level in one territory, Nunavut, where there were 2.97 children per woman. The total fertility rate was also above the national average in Saskatchewan (1.99), the Northwest Territories (1.97), Manitoba (1.86), Alberta (1.81), Yukon (1.73) and Quebec (1.69). In contrast, the total fertility rate was below the national average in 2011 in New Brunswick (1.54), Ontario (1.52), Nova Scotia (1.47), Newfoundland and Labrador (1.45) and British Columbia (1.42). At 1.62 children per woman, the total fertility rate in Prince Edward Island in 2011 was close to the level for Canada as a whole.

Table 2
Total fertility rate (number of children per woman), Canada, provinces and territories, 1981 to 2011

Year	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.	Canada
	number of children per woman													
1981	...	1.89	1.62	1.67	1.58	1.58	1.83	2.11	1.86	1.63	2.06	2.88	...	1.65
1986	...	1.80	1.58	1.53	1.38	1.60	1.83	2.02	1.84	1.61	1.96	2.87	...	1.59
1991	1.44	1.86	1.59	1.56	1.65	1.69	1.98	2.05	1.90	1.68	2.17	4.47	...	1.72
1996	1.31	1.74	1.52	1.46	1.61	1.61	1.90	1.91	1.75	1.56	1.70	4.39	...	1.63
2001	1.30	1.55	1.40	1.41	1.50	1.53	1.82	1.90	1.67	1.40	1.57	1.84	3.08	1.54
2002	1.31	1.49	1.38	1.40	1.47	1.48	1.81	1.84	1.69	1.39	1.56	1.89	3.02	1.51
2003	1.33	1.60	1.39	1.43	1.50	1.51	1.82	1.88	1.74	1.42	1.50	2.05	3.09	1.54
2004	1.32	1.58	1.41	1.42	1.50	1.53	1.79	1.86	1.74	1.43	1.63	2.02	2.96	1.55
2005	1.36	1.54	1.40	1.43	1.54	1.54	1.84	1.87	1.74	1.44	1.41	2.07	2.72	1.57
2006	1.41	1.65	1.40	1.48	1.65	1.55	1.89	1.91	1.81	1.47	1.61	2.01	2.82	1.61
2007	1.45	1.63	1.48	1.52	1.68	1.57	1.96	2.03	1.90	1.51	1.58	2.11	2.97	1.66
2008	1.58	1.73	1.54	1.59	1.74	1.59	1.96	2.05	1.92	1.50	1.64	2.08	2.99	1.68
2009	1.59	1.69	1.50	1.59	1.74	1.56	1.98	2.07	1.89	1.50	1.65	2.06	3.26	1.67
2010	1.58	1.62	1.48	1.59	1.71	1.54	1.92	2.03	1.83	1.43	1.60	1.98	3.00	1.63
2011	1.45	1.62	1.47	1.54	1.69	1.52	1.86	1.99	1.81	1.42	1.73	1.97	2.97	1.61

Notes: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated. Nunavut is included in the Northwest Territories before 2001. Data by age of mother not available in Newfoundland and Labrador before 1991.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1981 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

The pattern observed at the national level of declines in the total fertility rate over the past several years occurred in most provinces and territories. An increase in the total fertility rate occurred in Yukon from 1.60 children per woman in 2010 to 1.73 in 2011. In Prince Edward Island, the total fertility rate was stable in both 2010 and 2011 (1.62) while there was stability in New Brunswick from 2008 to 2010 (1.59) followed by a decline in 2011 (1.54). Newfoundland and Labrador had the largest drop in the total fertility rate from 1.58 in 2010 to 1.45 in 2011, and also experienced more than 500 fewer births in 2011 compared to the previous year. Some provinces and territories, despite a declining or stable total fertility rate, had more births in 2011 than in 2010 including Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia and Nunavut.

Many other industrialized countries have fertility levels that are farther below replacement than that in Canada. For example, the total fertility rate in 2010 in Hungary (1.26 children per woman), Japan (1.39), Germany (1.39) and Italy (1.41) were all below the average number of children per woman in this country.[1] Although still below replacement level, the total fertility rate in a number of European countries was higher than that of Canada, such as Belgium (1.87), Denmark (1.88), Norway (1.95), Sweden (1.98), United Kingdom (1.98) and France (1.99). In the United States, the total fertility rate in 2010 was 1.93, after remaining at 2.00 or above throughout much of the previous decade, even reaching replacement level, 2.12, in 2007.

The fertility levels in the two most populous countries of the world, China and India, could have differing impacts on the future population of these countries as well as on the world population. China, currently at about 1.35 billion, had a below-replacement total fertility rate of 1.60 children per woman in 2010, largely as a result of the one-child policy in that country. India, the second most populous country, at 1.26 billion, had a total fertility rate of 2.63 in 2010, well above replacement level. If these fertility patterns continue then India will surpass China as the most populous country in the world roughly within a decade.[2]

The estimated total fertility rate for the world as a whole in 2012 was 2.4 children per woman. Many of the least industrialized countries generally have fertility levels that are much higher than elsewhere in the world, averaging 4.4 children per woman. The total fertility rate was 4.7 children per woman in Africa and within this continent, higher still for particular countries, such as Niger (7.1), in Western Africa and the Eastern African countries of Burundi and Somalia (6.4 each).[3]

1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2010. "Total Fertility Rate", *OECD Factbook 2012*, accessed March 19, 2013.
2. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2010. "Total Fertility Rates", *OECD Factbook 2012*, accessed March 19, 2013. Population for China and India from Population Reference Bureau. 2012. *2012 World Population Data Sheet*.
3. Population Reference Bureau. 2012. *2012 World Population Data Sheet*.

Age-specific fertility rates

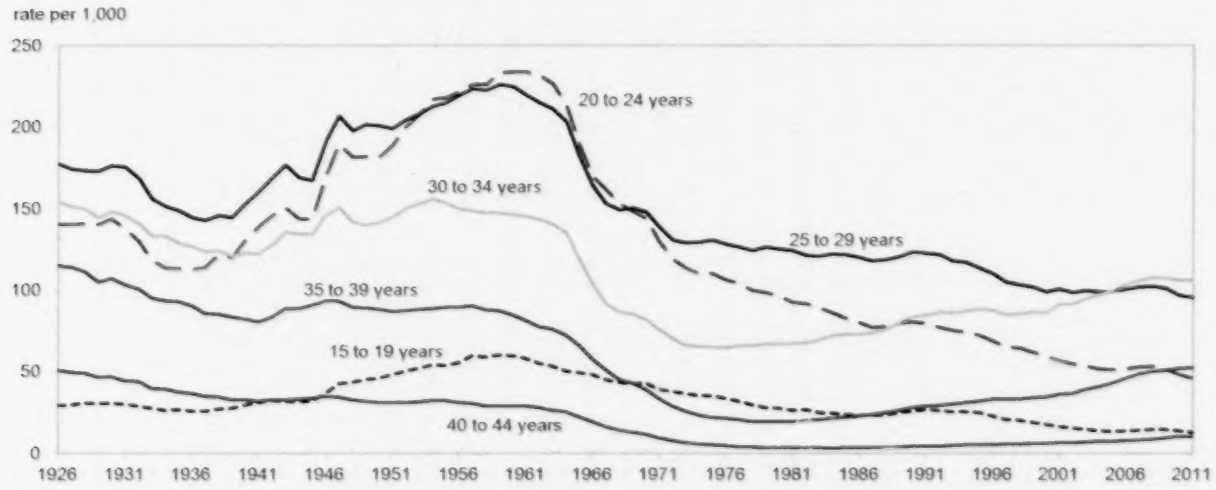
The overall decrease in the total fertility rate in Canada over the past four decades is due to relatively steady declines in the age-specific fertility rates of all age groups under age 30. In contrast, the fertility rates of those aged 30 and over have generally increased.

The slightly higher fertility rate for women aged 30 to 34 than for women aged 25 to 29 which began in 2005 continued in 2011 with a successive widening of the gap between these two age groups (Figure 2). In 2011, the fertility rate for women in their early thirties was 105.9 births per 1,000 women while for 25- to 29-year-olds it was 95.2 (Table 3). For women in their late twenties, the fertility rate has generally been falling for about the past five decades, from a high of 225.9 births per 1,000 women in 1959. In contrast, the fertility rate of 30- to 34-year-olds has been on an overall upward trend since a low of 64.5 births per 1,000 women in 1976, consistent with observed patterns of delayed childbearing from other indicators. Of note, however, is that the fertility rates of women in their early thirties was even higher throughout the 1926 to 1965 period than it was in 2011, for example, it was 153.9 births per 1,000 women in 1926 falling to 120.4 in 1939, before peaking even higher at 155.1 in 1965.

For the first time in 2010, the age-specific fertility rate was higher for women aged 35 to 39 (51.7 births per 1,000 women) than for women aged 20 to 24 (48.0 births per 1,000 women). By 2011, this gap had widened further to 52.3 and 45.7 births per 1,000 women in each respective age group. The rate for women in their late thirties has been on an overall increase since the late 1970s; it is now close to triple the low of 18.9 births per 1,000 women in 1978, and is the highest rate for this age group since 1966. Nevertheless, it is still less than half of the age-specific fertility rate of 1926 (114.6). In contrast, the fertility rate for women in their early twenties, after peaking at 233.6 births per 1,000 women in 1960 and 1961, subsequently fell, reaching a record low in 2011 (45.7) among the data observed since 1926.

The gap has also narrowed between one of the older age groups of women in their reproductive years (40- to 44-year-olds) and one of the younger age groups (15- to 19-year-olds). In 2011, the age-specific fertility rates were relatively close for women in their early forties (10.3 births per 1,000 women) and those in their late teens (12.6 births per 1,000 women). In the late 1990s, the fertility rate of women in their early forties was roughly one-quarter that of women in their late teens. Historically, the age-specific fertility rate for young women aged 15 to 19 was high throughout

Figure 2
Fertility rate by age group, Canada, 1926 to 2011



Note: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1926 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

Table 3
Fertility rate by age group (for 1,000 women), Canada, provinces and territories, 2001 to 2011

Year and age group	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.	Canada
	per 1,000 women													
2001														
Less than 20 years	17.9	17.4	16.6	20.1	13.5	13.0	33.1	32.3	21.2	13.2	25.0	45.9	120.4	16.1
20 to 24 years	55.1	63.9	56.9	68.8	57.5	48.1	81.5	93.3	69.1	47.3	86.1	101.8	213.9	56.5
25 to 29 years	91.2	109.8	91.9	98.8	109.1	96.3	113.7	128.4	105.9	86.3	82.5	93.7	124.6	100.4
30 to 34 years	70.1	86.3	82.8	69.7	84.5	99.2	94.1	89.9	94.8	85.7	81.5	77.1	87.7	91.5
35 to 39 years	21.8	25.5	27.6	21.2	28.6	41.5	34.9	28.6	36.3	39.1	29.4	40.6	40.1	35.7
40 to 44 years	2.7	4.5	4.1	2.5	4.4	7.5	5.5	4.5	5.9	7.2	8.9	9.0	20.2	6.1
45 years and over	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	4.4	0.1
2006														
Less than 20 years	16.6	12.4	14.8	18.5	9.4	10.5	30.2	33.8	19.6	10.9	19.1	40.7	118.3	13.5
20 to 24 years	56.8	61.1	52.4	64.3	52.1	41.9	79.3	85.4	67.5	42.9	73.2	90.6	173.2	51.4
25 to 29 years	92.8	103.3	86.4	100.5	113.5	92.3	115.9	124.5	112.6	83.5	85.8	112.4	131.5	100.5
30 to 34 years	80.5	101.8	86.4	81.0	107.0	106.3	101.7	96.7	107.5	96.6	87.5	97.5	79.4	103.3
35 to 39 years	30.2	44.1	34.4	27.9	40.9	50.0	43.2	35.9	47.3	49.8	46.8	49.6	42.3	45.8
40 to 44 years	3.0	5.6	5.1	3.0	6.0	8.5	6.7	5.1	7.5	8.8	7.4	10.4	13.9	7.4
45 years and over	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.5	0.2
2007														
Less than 20 years	17.0	17.0	16.5	19.8	9.7	10.8	31.9	35.3	20.8	10.7	16.6	35.7	116.6	14.0
20 to 24 years	57.8	57.3	53.3	67.7	53.0	42.5	82.0	86.8	69.2	44.4	51.8	108.7	195.2	52.5
25 to 29 years	95.7	100.5	91.0	103.9	114.7	90.7	118.6	133.6	118.8	84.9	104.3	100.6	124.9	101.6
30 to 34 years	85.7	104.9	92.4	81.5	108.7	108.0	106.0	104.0	112.0	99.5	94.6	111.0	98.0	106.0
35 to 39 years	29.5	40.5	37.2	27.9	43.9	52.6	45.1	40.6	50.9	52.2	39.5	56.0	42.0	48.5
40 to 44 years	3.3	4.7	5.1	3.6	6.6	8.8	7.4	5.1	8.5	9.6	8.3	9.7	12.1	7.9
45 years and over	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.0	1.0	1.4	0.2
2008														
Less than 20 years	19.4	15.4	18.7	20.8	10.1	11.1	31.3	36.3	20.5	10.7	26.4	31.1	116.7	14.3
20 to 24 years	65.4	67.3	55.2	70.7	54.2	42.5	81.8	91.5	67.7	44.2	54.8	105.2	206.5	53.0
25 to 29 years	99.7	110.8	92.6	104.1	117.6	91.2	116.1	131.3	118.0	82.2	94.9	101.0	133.6	102.0
30 to 34 years	93.3	94.5	94.5	86.1	112.1	107.8	107.8	105.5	115.5	99.2	95.2	106.6	88.2	107.4
35 to 39 years	33.3	50.1	41.0	31.3	46.5	53.6	46.5	40.4	52.4	53.4	47.7	58.1	42.5	50.2
40 to 44 years	4.0	5.9	5.5	4.4	7.1	9.4	7.5	6.0	9.0	9.8	9.3	13.7	11.9	8.4
45 years and over	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.2
2009														
Less than 20 years	19.2	16.9	18.3	20.9	11.1	10.8	32.7	34.3	20.1	10.3	23.5	34.4	110.6	14.2
20 to 24 years	59.0	62.6	55.0	70.9	53.1	41.0	78.2	90.0	65.3	41.1	63.3	101.2	202.8	51.2
25 to 29 years	101.7	102.8	88.0	109.1	117.2	88.3	119.2	138.0	115.3	81.6	93.8	94.9	141.6	100.6
30 to 34 years	98.1	104.5	92.1	83.3	111.1	107.4	108.7	104.6	114.8	99.6	84.9	106.3	120.0	107.1
35 to 39 years	34.9	43.0	40.3	29.8	47.2	54.1	47.1	40.8	52.6	54.5	52.0	58.4	52.2	50.7
40 to 44 years	4.1	7.2	6.2	3.8	8.1	10.1	9.2	6.9	9.8	10.6	11.1	13.5	19.9	9.2
45 years and over	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.2
2010														
Less than 20 years	21.8	14.9	18.0	23.2	9.8	10.6	29.6	34.4	18.3	9.6	19.2	37.5	104.7	13.5
20 to 24 years	58.2	53.7	52.9	67.8	49.9	38.6	74.0	85.5	61.6	36.9	61.3	92.4	202.3	48.0
25 to 29 years	100.2	102.9	86.4	104.8	113.4	85.0	114.3	128.7	109.7	76.8	92.8	97.1	146.4	96.4
30 to 34 years	94.9	103.6	93.1	85.3	110.9	106.3	108.0	106.2	112.0	95.7	84.5	104.7	80.5	105.8
35 to 39 years	35.7	41.2	37.2	31.1	49.1	55.0	48.5	44.1	53.8	54.5	45.3	49.3	48.2	51.7
40 to 44 years	5.1	5.9	7.0	4.5	8.6	10.9	9.2	7.1	10.7	11.1	11.9	14.6	11.6	9.9
45 years and over	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.6	0.2
2011														
Less than 20 years	17.7	16.6	17.3	21.3	9.2	9.8	28.9	32.5	17.3	8.5	16.2	33.5	108.0	12.6
20 to 24 years	51.8	49.0	51.2	64.6	48.6	37.1	71.1	76.6	58.9	34.2	51.9	92.1	193.9	45.7
25 to 29 years	89.4	104.8	86.2	101.2	111.8	84.2	110.9	129.9	107.8	76.8	97.1	93.0	142.1	95.2
30 to 34 years	89.1	107.1	91.0	83.6	108.5	106.7	106.1	107.9	114.6	98.1	103.1	87.6	88.3	105.9
35 to 39 years	37.0	39.8	40.4	31.6	51.1	55.3	46.9	43.3	53.0	55.5	70.4	74.9	49.6	52.3
40 to 44 years	4.7	5.7	7.0	4.7	9.6	11.2	8.5	7.5	11.0	11.1	8.7	9.3	8.7	10.3
45 years and over	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3

Note: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 2001 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

the late 1940s to the 1960s and in 1959—the peak of the baby boom—it was 59.7 births per 1,000 women, about 4.5 times the 2011 rate for this age group. In general, the period throughout the 1980s to the present has seen the lowest fertility rates for young women in the data observed since 1926. While at its highest level in 2011 (10.3 births per 1,000 women) since 1970, the age-specific fertility rate of women in their early forties was five times as high in 1926 (50.6) as it was in 2011.

Age of mother at childbirth and birth order

For the first time in the data observed since 1945, the average age of mothers at childbirth in 2010 was over age 30, specifically, it was 30.1 years. By 2011, it had edged up to 30.2 years. It is notable that the average age of mothers in 1945 was somewhat similar, 29.3 years, although the reasons behind the patterns are much different. Earlier in the 20th Century, contraception was less effective and most childbearing occurred within marriage, which, in turn, took place at relatively older ages. Consequently, childbearing would have continued throughout a woman's reproductive years for the duration of her married life. In contrast, reasons which may account for the later age of childbirth today—which began rising in the mid-1970s—include women's pursuit of higher levels of education, greater labour force participation and delayed union formation, as well as improved methods to control the timing and number of births.

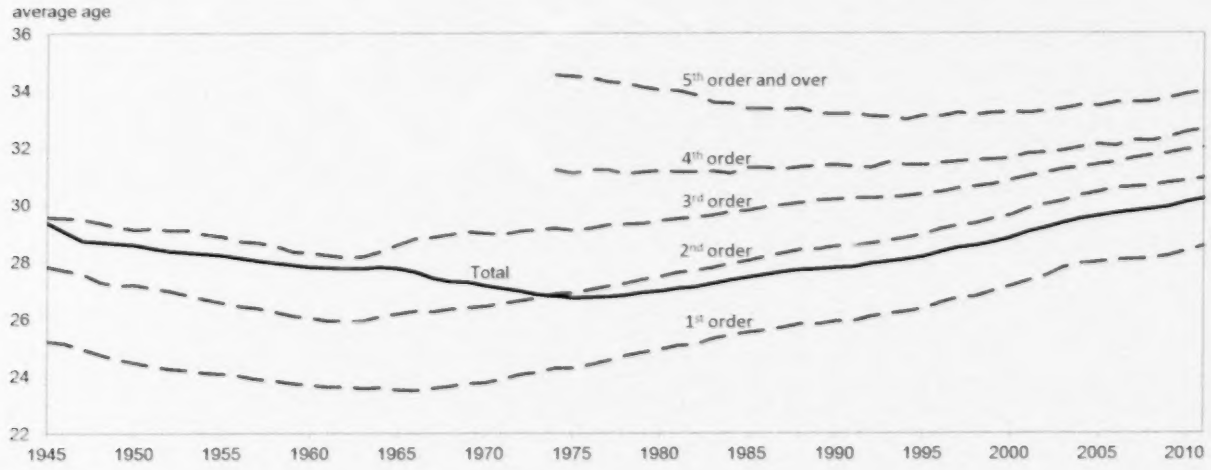
However, in the decades between 1945 and the mid-1970s—overlapping to a large extent with the baby boom years when the average age at marriage was relatively young—the average age of mother at childbirth was also fairly young and decreased to a low of 26.7 years in 1975.

In 1945, the average age at first birth was 25.2 years, corresponding with an older age at marriage. In the mid-1960s, the average age of first birth had decreased to 23.5 years, but subsequently began shifting to older ages and this has continued for nearly 50 years. For first-time mothers in 2011, the average age at birth was 28.5 years (Figure 3). Across Canada, the youngest average age of mother at first birth in 2011 was in Nunavut (22.1 years) and the oldest was in British Columbia (29.5 years).

Of the 377,636 births in Canada in 2011, more than two-fifths (43.3%) were first births, while the remaining 56.7% were second births or more: over one-third (35.5%) of babies born were second-order births and about one-fifth (21.2%) were third or higher order.

Over the past century, childbearing has become increasingly concentrated for women in their late twenties to early thirties. That is, although women have their first birth at older ages compared to several decades ago, they have fewer children overall and complete their childbearing in a relatively short time span. The average ages of mother at second- and higher-order births were all in their early thirties in 2011. At the second birth, the average

Figure 3
Average age of mother by birth order, Canada, 1945 to 2011



Note: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1945 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

age of mother was 30.9 years, increasing to 32.0 years at the third birth, to 32.6 years at the fourth birth and to 33.9 years for the fifth- or higher-order birth. In 1979, there was nearly a 10-year gap between the average age at first birth (24.8 years) and fifth birth or higher (34.1 years). By 2011, this gap had narrowed to 5.4 years.

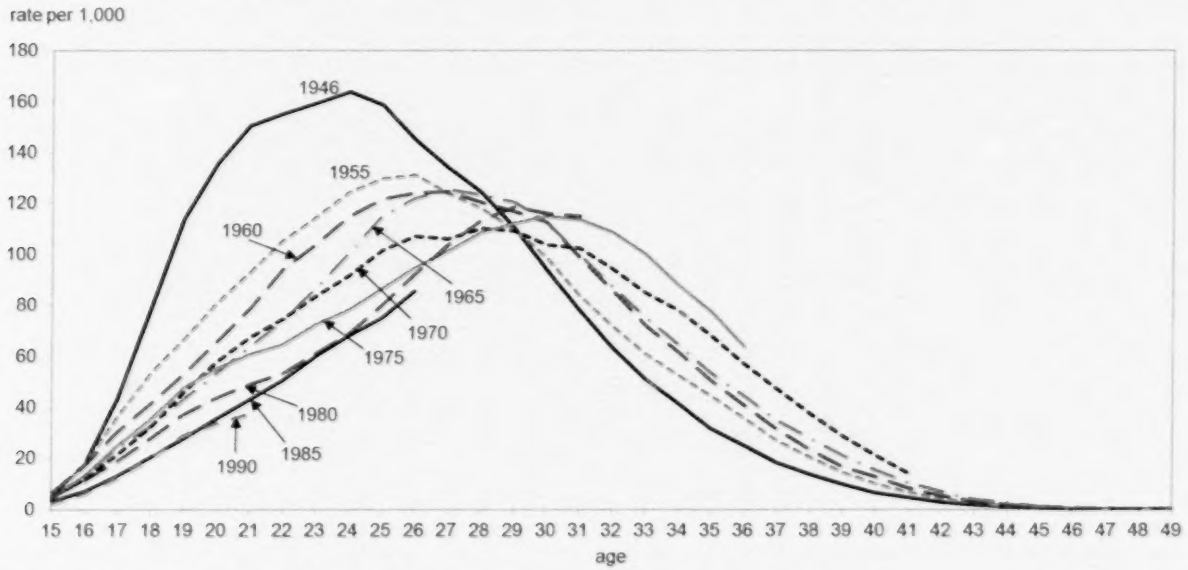
Over half of all births in 2011 were to women aged 30 and older (52.2%), more than twice the share in 1981 (23.6%). Close to one in five (19.2%) births in 2011 were to women aged 35 and older, as were less than one in 20 (4.9%) in 1981. Conversely, 3.6% of all births in Canada in 2011 were to mothers under age 20, most of which were first births. The proportion of births to mothers under age 20 has been at or below 5% since 2000. At the provincial and territorial level, Nunavut had the largest share of all births in 2011 that were to young women under age 20 (20.8%), followed by the Northwest Territories and Saskatchewan (8.1% each) and Manitoba (8.0%) while the share was smallest in Quebec (2.5%), British Columbia (2.6%) and Ontario (3.0%).

Completed fertility rate of recent cohorts

The total fertility rate is a common indicator used for analysing fertility trends owing to its ease of calculation and its ability to summarize trends for a given calendar year. This indicator, however, is influenced by fluctuations in the tempo of childbearing. In contrast, the completed fertility rate, which refers to the actual fertility experiences of cohorts of women who are no longer in their reproductive years, is a longitudinal indicator which is not affected by the changes in the tempo of fertility. It can be useful to better understand the changes in the fertility behaviours of different cohorts of women. The disadvantage is that it takes many years to obtain the data required to produce this indicator for a given cohort. The completed fertility rate for women born up to 1960 can be calculated in 2011, as they were aged 51. It is also possible to estimate the completed fertility rate of the 1970 birth cohort, who were aged 41 in 2011, and whose fertility rates have already peaked. Similarly, the fertility rates of the 1975 cohort, aged 36 in 2011, have also started to decline. The estimated completed fertility rate for more recent cohorts introduces a higher degree of uncertainty as more of their childbearing years are based on extrapolation of the recent trends.

The first baby boom cohort, that is, women born in 1946, is often taken as a reference group as this was the last cohort to have achieved replacement level fertility (2.1 children per woman). These women had much higher levels of fertility throughout their late teens and early twenties compared to cohorts born in 1970 and later, but this

Figure 4
Fertility rate by age for selected cohorts, Canada



Note: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.

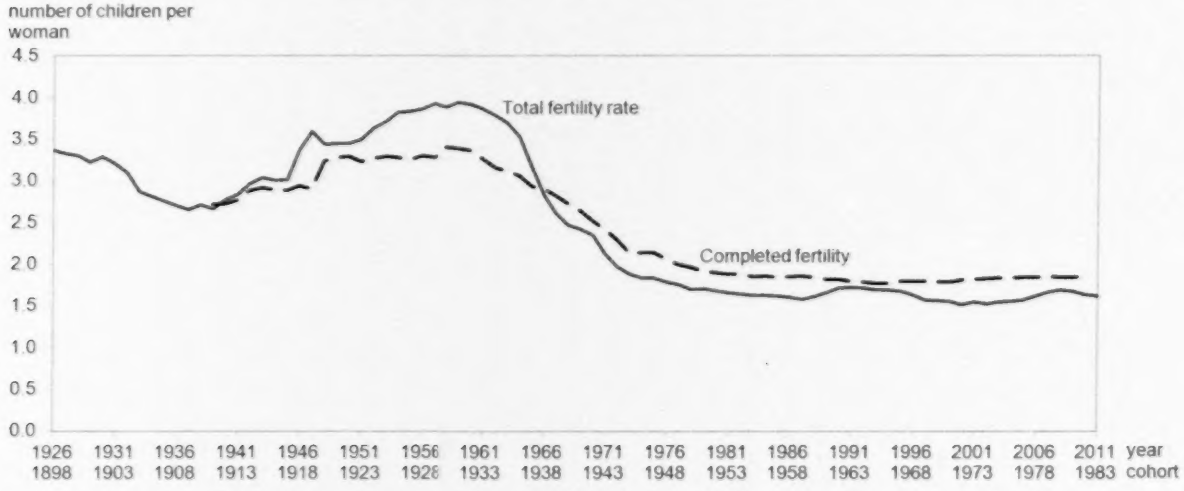
Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1946 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

level fell fairly rapidly by their early thirties and is actually lower at this age than it is for more recent cohorts of women. In fact, the age-specific fertility rates of these recent cohorts, while lower than the 1946 cohort until about age 28 has surpassed that of all earlier cohorts of women after age 30 (Figure 4). For example, at age 40, the fertility level of the cohort born in 1970, and who are approaching completion of their reproductive years, was 20.9 births per 1,000 women, which is higher than earlier cohorts when they were this age: more than double that of the 1955 cohort (10.1 births per 1,000 women) and more than triple that of the 1946 cohort (6.3). This is a significant change in childbearing patterns given that the difference between the cohorts is less than 25 years.

Peak fertility levels have been falling and shifting toward older ages for more recent cohorts, reflecting both a lower number of births overall as well as delayed childbearing. The 1946 cohort peaked at age 24 with a fertility rate of 163.8 births per 1,000 women. The 1965 cohort reached a maximum fertility at age 27 with a rate of 125.4 births per 1,000 women while this occurred for the 1970 cohort at age 28 (110.1). The cohorts from 1975 to 1979 peaked even higher, that is, at age 30. Higher fertility rates of women throughout their thirties, however, does not offset lower fertility rates while in their twenties. To date, this results in a lower overall completed fertility as women do not simply 'make up' for lower fertility rates in their twenties by having higher fertility rates at older ages.

Over the past century, higher fertility during the baby boom years and lower fertility in the subsequent decades can be observed using either the total fertility rate or the completed fertility rate. The difference, however, is that the total fertility rate is characterized by more variation over time, primarily related to the fact that this indicator summarizes the fertility behaviour of many cohorts during a given year (Figure 5). From 1940 to 1965, the total fertility rate surpassed the completed fertility rate due to an increase in the number of children per woman, younger ages at childbirth and shorter intervals between births, as well as compensation—to a certain extent—for births which were postponed because of the Second World War.[4] Since 1966, the completed fertility rate has been higher than that of the total fertility rate, reflecting delayed childbearing as the mean age at childbearing went from 27.6 years in 1966 to 30.2 years in 2011.

Figure 5
Total fertility rate, 1926 to 2011 and completed fertility rate, 1911 to 1982



Notes: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.

Any given data point in the figure corresponds to a particular calendar year and a particular cohort. The difference between the two x axes, that is, the total fertility rate and the cohort fertility rate in the figure is the mean age at childbearing.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 1926 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.

4. Romaniuc, A. 1984. *Fertility in Canada: From baby-boom to baby-bust*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 91-524E.

Table A1

Total fertility rate by birth order, Canada, provinces and territories, 2001 to 2011

Birth order	N.L.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	Y.T.	N.W.T.	Nvt.	Canada
	number of children per woman													
2001														
1st order	0.63	0.64	0.62	0.65	0.70	0.69	0.69	0.70	0.71	0.63	0.76	0.75	0.91	0.68
2nd order	0.50	0.59	0.51	0.53	0.55	0.55	0.61	0.62	0.58	0.51	0.46	0.53	0.74	0.55
3rd order	0.13	0.23	0.19	0.17	0.17	0.20	0.29	0.33	0.24	0.18	0.25	0.28	0.52	0.20
4th order	0.03	0.07	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.12	0.14	0.09	0.05	0.07	0.17	0.33	0.06
5th order and over	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.11	0.11	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.11	0.57	0.04
2006														
1st order	0.67	0.67	0.65	0.70	0.76	0.70	0.73	0.72	0.79	0.68	0.73	0.93	0.86	0.73
2nd order	0.52	0.64	0.49	0.53	0.59	0.56	0.59	0.61	0.61	0.53	0.61	0.58	0.69	0.57
3rd order	0.16	0.24	0.18	0.17	0.20	0.20	0.30	0.32	0.25	0.17	0.15	0.26	0.48	0.21
4th order	0.04	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.13	0.14	0.09	0.06	0.08	0.14	0.28	0.07
5th order and over	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.14	0.13	0.07	0.03	0.04	0.10	0.51	0.04
2007														
1st order	0.70	0.64	0.67	0.72	0.77	0.70	0.75	0.75	0.83	0.70	0.66	0.95	1.01	0.74
2nd order	0.53	0.60	0.53	0.53	0.60	0.57	0.61	0.66	0.64	0.55	0.52	0.58	0.64	0.59
3rd order	0.16	0.29	0.20	0.20	0.21	0.21	0.31	0.34	0.26	0.19	0.25	0.32	0.46	0.22
4th order	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.15	0.14	0.10	0.05	0.10	0.14	0.34	0.07
5th order and over	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.15	0.14	0.07	0.03	0.04	0.12	0.53	0.04
2008														
1st order	0.79	0.74	0.70	0.75	0.79	0.70	0.73	0.79	0.83	0.70	0.72	0.96	0.91	0.74
2nd order	0.55	0.62	0.53	0.56	0.63	0.57	0.62	0.64	0.65	0.54	0.53	0.57	0.70	0.59
3rd order	0.17	0.26	0.21	0.19	0.23	0.21	0.30	0.34	0.27	0.18	0.29	0.27	0.46	0.23
4th order	0.04	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.15	0.14	0.10	0.06	0.05	0.15	0.39	0.07
5th order and over	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.15	0.13	0.07	0.03	0.05	0.13	0.53	0.05
2009														
1st order	0.78	0.71	0.69	0.76	0.79	0.68	0.75	0.81	0.82	0.69	0.73	0.92	0.94	0.73
2nd order	0.56	0.59	0.52	0.56	0.62	0.56	0.61	0.68	0.64	0.54	0.57	0.53	0.82	0.58
3rd order	0.17	0.27	0.20	0.19	0.23	0.22	0.31	0.33	0.26	0.19	0.22	0.33	0.55	0.23
4th order	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.15	0.14	0.10	0.05	0.08	0.13	0.40	0.08
5th order and over	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.17	0.11	0.07	0.03	0.04	0.14	0.55	0.05
2010														
1st order	0.77	0.67	0.69	0.74	0.76	0.65	0.71	0.78	0.78	0.67	0.82	0.91	0.85	0.70
2nd order	0.56	0.57	0.50	0.56	0.61	0.56	0.60	0.65	0.63	0.51	0.47	0.55	0.74	0.57
3rd order	0.19	0.27	0.20	0.21	0.23	0.21	0.31	0.33	0.26	0.17	0.21	0.28	0.52	0.23
4th order	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.14	0.14	0.09	0.05	0.06	0.13	0.40	0.07
5th order and over	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.16	0.13	0.07	0.03	0.05	0.11	0.49	0.05
2011														
1st order	0.70	0.67	0.67	0.73	0.75	0.66	0.70	0.76	0.76	0.66	0.83	0.92	0.91	0.70
2nd order	0.54	0.59	0.50	0.54	0.61	0.55	0.58	0.64	0.63	0.52	0.56	0.53	0.65	0.57
3rd order	0.15	0.27	0.20	0.18	0.23	0.21	0.30	0.33	0.26	0.17	0.25	0.27	0.55	0.22
4th order	0.04	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.13	0.14	0.09	0.05	0.05	0.13	0.34	0.07
5th order and over	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.15	0.12	0.07	0.03	0.04	0.13	0.53	0.05

Note: Births to mothers for whom the age is unknown were prorated.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Canadian Vital Statistics, Births Database, 2001 to 2011, Survey 3231 and Demography Division, demographic estimates.